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ABSTRACT

Suggestopedia is a recent teaching technique which enables students to learn with impressive speed, little conscious effort, and a great deal of pleasure. Developed by Georgi Lozanov, suggestopedia is based on the assumption that a number of environmental, social, and psychological variables can be altered to make more effective use of students' ability to learn. The power of suggestion is a key element in this technique. Ways to break down "anti-suggestive" barriers are: (1) seating students in comfortable armchairs; (2) using music; (3) using posters or artifacts; (4) increasing individual participation; and (5) having a teacher that is well-trained in suggestopedia. Based on elements that are foreign to most American educators, suggestopedia has demonstrated a success which merits serious consideration by an open-minded educational community. A list of seven documents retrieved from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database that summarize research on suggestopedia is appended. (DC)

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Suggestopedia: A New Way to Learn

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August, 1983

Suggestopedia, developed in Bulgaria by psychiatrist Dr. Georgi Lozanov, is a recent teaching technique that is receiving increasing attention in the United States. Also known as "superlearning" and "accelerated learning", suggestopedia is a method which claims to train students to learn a vast amount of material in much less time than conventional teaching practices. The results of studies using the American adaptation of suggestopedia, called Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching (SALT), have been startling; students throughout this country are learning not only with impressive speed but with little conscious effort and a great deal of pleasure.

The basic assumption of suggestopedia is that people only use a fraction of their brain capacity and that a number of environmental, social and psychological variables may constrain individuals from making more effective use of their ability to learn. Dr. Lozanov feels that traditional classrooms with their often tense environments, depersonalized lessons, and low expectations lead to a fear of learning and a lack of self-confidence, and stifle an individual's learning potential.

The power of suggestion is a key element in the suggestopedia technique. Lozanov and his followers believe that through conscious and unconscious suggestion, students can feel that learning is a relaxing, pleasurable experience, and that when students enjoy learning they can better realize their full mental capabilities. In order to achieve suggestopedia, the "anti-suggestive" barriers to learning (defined by Lozanov as the factors that inhibit learning: boredom, lack of self-confidence and other negative variables) must be broken down. Suggestopedia achieves this breakdown, in a number of unique ways:

1. The traditional arrangement of desks in rows is abandoned; instead, the students may sit in comfortable arm chairs in a simulated living room setting.

2. Music is employed in many ways. It may be played to create a relaxed atmosphere. Lyrics of specially-written songs may contain elements of the lesson to be learned. For example, an algebraic concept may be incorporated into the plotline of an opera listened to by math students. In the séance phase of suggestopedia, students breathe in time to slow-paced baroque music while listening to their instructor give them their lessons, thus engaging both the left and right brains of the students.

3. There are other ways in which suggestopedia addresses the whole brain through verbalized instruction with nonverbal components. A suggestopedia classroom often displays posters or other artifacts to reinforce lessons on a nonverbal, unconscious level. In a French language class, for example, students might speak dialogues surrounded by travel posters of France with songs of that country playing in the background.

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4. To increase personal participation and encourage shy and unsure students, individuals may be given new identities and engage in role-playing. In that same French class, students who previously felt insecure might gain confidence pretending they are French citizens talking about their imaginary lives.

5. A teacher well-trained in the suggestopedic method is essential. Ideally, the instructor should have a background in dramatics, for suggestopedia often calls for role-playing and dynamic readings of the subject matter to be learned. It would also be desirable for the instructor to be familiar with physical and mental relaxation techniques in order to create an atmosphere free of tension that is necessary for suggestopedia to proceed.

Suggestopedia is a teaching technique that contains many instructional elements foreign to most American educators. Indeed, Dr. Lozanov based many of his ideas on Eastern philosophies such as yoga. However, because of the amazing progress students have made in classrooms in this country and abroad, learning at rates three to ten times normal speed, suggestopedia is a method that should be given serious consideration by an open-minded educational community.

The following documents collected from the ERIC database summarize major research studies on suggestopedia. Full copies are available from the SMERC Information Center. Call 363-5447 to order any that interest you.

Educational Journal Articles

"My Experience with the Lozanov Method." Dolores A. Schaefer. Foreign Language Annals, September 1980, pp.273-78. (6 pages)

"Suggestopedia: A New Training Technique." William W. Garry. Educational Technology, June 1978, pp.5-8. (4 pages)

"The Lozanov Method and Its American Adaptations." W. Jane Bancroft. The Modern Language Journal, April 1978, pp.167-75. (9 pages)

ERIC Microfiche Documents

Left Brain, Right Brain, Super Brain: The Holistic Model. David Yellin. (ED 218 586: 1 microfiche)

Suggestopedia and Its Application to the Education of Children with Learning Disabilities. Phyllis P. Brownlee. 1980. (ED 204 928: 3 microfiche)

The Journal of Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching. Volume 4, No. 3. Donald Schuster, Editor. Society for Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching, Des Moines, Iowa. 1979. (ED 193 945: 1 microfiche)

Suggestology and Suggestopedia: A Selective Bibliography of Western Sources. Mill and Barry S. Bayuk, Comp. 1980. (ED 192 556: 1 microfiche)